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TWENTY QUESTIONS FOR STATE DEFENSE FORCE LEADERSHIP

Colonel R.W.P. Patterson (ALSDF-Ret)

The following series of questions are directed to you and your state's leadership responsible for the State Defense Force (SDF) in your state. These are *direct questions* that call for *direct answers*. If the responses are positive, then your state is most certainly on the right track. Press forward! If the responses are not positive, and they probably aren't, then there is work to be done and you are late in getting started. Failure to be willing to even seriously address these issues is just what is says...*failure*.

Consider:

1. Does the leadership of your state, to include the Governor, The Adjutant General (TAG), the SDF Commanding General (CG), and major SDF unit commanders consider your state seriously *involved* in the War on Terrorism beyond just providing National Guard troops when called to do so?
2. Is your State Defense Force at its authorized strength for the current war time scenario? If not, why not?
3. What Is the *military* mission of your State Defense Force during this time of war? Has it changed since the attack of 9-11 or since major terrorist groups openly declared war on the US?
4. Have senior members or leadership of your SDF requested a current mission review and subsequent reorganization to meet a changing world's demands? If so, what happened to such recommendations? If not, why not? (See question #1.)
5. Is there a true *military* role for your SDF at this time in the war on terrorism? If so, where is this spelled out?
6. Has an *official study* recently been done to assess the threats possible against your state during this War on Terrorism? If so, who did it and when? Was your SDF involved? (See question #1.)
7. Is your SDF armed? If not, why not? If your state's citizens can be armed after a background check and payment of a fee, why isn't your *state military force trained* and allowed to carry personal side arms to protect themselves during emergencies or when guarding state facilities? (See question #1.)
8. To whom does the Governor turn for support in meeting state Homeland Defense missions such as increased state security needs, damage assessment, or additional law enforcement support if the National Guard is federalized? (See question #1.)

9. The active military and National Guard have responded to the present threat by accomplishing several *major* reorganizations since 9-11 *and they continue to do so even now*. Has your SDF been reorganized to face this new and current threat to your state? If not, why not? (See question #1.)
10. How much of a budget (if any) does your SDF get each year from your state? How is it spent? Is this public knowledge?
11. As states are allotted additional Homeland Security grants from the federal government, does your SDF receive any of these funds? If so, how are these funds spent?
12. Does your SDF have access to any surplus radios, vehicles, trailers, emergency operations shelters, etc? Has SDF or civilian leadership tried to obtain any equipment from the state surplus system for SDF use?
13. What assistance does your state military department provide for the volunteer SDF to operate as a *military* organization?
14. According to a DOD paper dated NOV 2005 and posted on the State Guard Association of the US (SGAUS) web site, DOD says money for training materials (courses, books, films, etc) and surplus equipment is available for SDF units for use in Homeland Security and your TAG can request such assistance. Has your state's military HQ done so? Has it asked its SDF command for requirements and needs so such items can be requested? (See question #1.)
15. Are there any centralized training programs (on-site or on-line) set up at state level for your SDF? (Officer's training programs, NCO training programs, MOI, CERT, Communications, etc.)?
16. Do you know what the percentage of personnel turn-over is for your SDF?
17. Do you know what the average age and experience level is for the SDF? Is it out of line with what is needed at this time in history? If age, physical conditioning, and other requirements are indeed out of line with needs and requirements, why doesn't your state HQ reorganize and mandate new standards to meet its needs?
18. How is you state's *unit military training* planned and accomplished if there is no specific *military* mission for which to train? (Parking cars and taking names are not *military* tasks.)
19. If after examination, it appears that your SDF is not now organized, trained, or directed to assist in the War on Terrorism, nor are there active plans to accomplish this, then does your SDF have any real function or purpose as a state *military* force? (See question #1.)
20. Would it not be prudent to create a Commission of law makers, National Guard, and SDF personnel to work out and recommend a current, realistic SDF *military* mission with supporting standards for your state in this critical time?

The questions posed here may indeed make many of us a bit uncomfortable, but tough problems call for tough questions. Our states and our nation simply can not afford to waste such a potentially valuable asset as its authorized State Defense Force. As leadership, we must not tolerate being part of a process that does not address these issues. Rather than give up and just walk away, we must set about to create change. We must simulate discussion, call for dialogue, and become part of the process to change how the SDF serves our various states.

The active force structure is strained, the National Guard has moved from a strategic reserve to an operational reserve if not to now actually being part of the regular force structure. State missions are at higher risk than ever before. In case of a full Homeland Security crisis, governors will have almost no options for military assistance after the Guard is federalized, and this does not even account for those Guard units that are activated and deployed overseas. The SDF is a federally authorized, state approved, low cost asset that can work, **IF** it is trained and made ready. In light of these 20 Questions, can you say that your SDF up to filling the breach?

Why not make some or all of these questions topics at your next staff meeting? SGAUS President MG (TN) Whitworth was on target when he said, “...*enter and influence the process...take the initiative....*”^j To this I would only add, if you don’t take these questions seriously, then who will?

There **IS** a war going on right now and it could be on *your state’s* doorstep tomorrow. The real question leadership must answer is, are we *planning a response to a very real threat using all the assets available*, or are we just going through the motions and *watching to see what will happen?* (See question #1.)^k

^j Farewell letter from the outgoing President, *SGAUS Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 2, Summer 2006, page 1.

^k The author, recently retired from the Alabama SDF, invites comments and discussion on this topic, and may be reached by email at K5DZE@ARRL.NET.